

# Tarrant County Family Professionals Workgroup (TCFP)

As independent practitioners, we frequently work with one another, taking a team approach to helping families overcome difficulties associated with family court involvement. We believe in maintaining healthy boundaries and clearly defining our roles in working with families, while empowering them to reach their maximum potential.

## WHAT WE DO:

### Parenting Facilitation

Parents (and other family members) may have difficulty managing their conflict with each other and can benefit from collaboration with a parenting facilitator who can help them work together to keep their children free from parental conflict. Parenting Facilitation is a child-centered non-confidential dispute resolution service designed for high conflict families (repeat offenders) that assists parents in developing and implementing workable [parenting plans](#) when they are unable to do so on their own. Parenting facilitators work to educate parents, meet jointly or individually with both parents to develop an ongoing plan, monitor communications, and assign tasks for parents, as needed, such as homework. The parenting facilitator can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the filial therapist, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, family therapist, reunification therapist, parent's individual therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Kim England, LCSW
- Bradley Craig, LMSW-IPR, CFLE

### Parenting Coordination

Parents may have difficulty managing their conflict with each other and can benefit from collaboration with a parenting coordinator who can help them work together to keep their children free from parental conflict. Parenting coordination is a child-centered dispute resolution service that assists parents in developing and implementing workable [parenting plans](#) when they are unable to do so on their own. Parenting coordinators work to educate parents, meet jointly or individually with both parents to develop an ongoing plan, monitor communications, and assign tasks for parents, as needed, such as homework. Unlike [parenting facilitation](#), parenting coordination is confidential.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Kim England, LCSW
- Bradley Craig, LMSW-IPR, CFLE

## WHO WE ARE:

### **Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW**

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## **Amicus Services**

Bitter, high-conflict family law disputes commonly require a team approach. The courts and the lawyers work with a variety of mental health professionals who have different roles and different backgrounds. Communication between lawyers and mental health providers is not always easy. Different vocabularies, divergent perspectives, varied agendas lend themselves to misunderstanding and miscommunication. In a difficult matter a lawyer who speaks both languages can offer significant advantages bridging the gap between models and modalities. Who better to make the most of quality mental health input – or challenge poor work than a lawyer who has conducted a thousand custody evaluations.

Providers include:

- Michael Flynn, JD, PhD

## **Adoption and Custody Evaluations**

Child Custody Evaluations (aka: Social Study Evaluations) are available when the Court is seeking recommendations for the custody of, parenting of, and access to the child(ren) in cases where the parents are unable to work out their own parenting plans. The evaluator will work to assess the ways in which each parent contributes to the physical, emotional, and social development of the child(ren) in question.

Adoption Evaluations are available when individuals choose to adopt children whose lives they are already involved. We handle both adoptive and nonrelative adoptions at a substantially discounted rate.

Providers include:

- Kim England, LCSW

## **Coparenting Counseling**

Parents (or other family members/guardians) may have unresolved issues from their unique relationship that are affecting their parenting practices. The coparent counselor works with parents to reduce blaming and encourage a focus on present and future parental behaviors and interaction patterns that will benefit the children. It is beneficial for parents to have participated in coparent education prior to participation in coparent counseling. The coparenting counselor can enhance the family members understanding of the information from the coparenting class and guide them through application to their specific family needs. Further, the coparenting counselor can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, amicus attorney, either parent's therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Gina Galloway, PhD, LPC-S
- Kim England, LCSW

## **Family Therapy**

Although family members may not live together in the same home, they have a shared history and future. In family counseling, specific members or all members of the family come together for exploration, growth, and healing in their relationships with each other. They explore, with the counselor, family expectations, concerns and communication styles. The family therapist can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, reunification therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Gina Galloway, PhD, LCSW
- Kim England, LCSW

## **Provider Qualifications\***

- **Licensed professionals**
- **Team approach to service**
- **Trained in Mediation and Family Law Mediation**
- **Trained in Parenting Facilitation and Parenting Coordination**
- **Qualified by the Texas Family Code to complete social study evaluations**
- **Members of the Association and Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC)**
- **Members of North Texas Families in Transition (NTXFIT)**
- **100+ combined years of experience working with children and families**
- **Extensive experience working with families raising children between two homes**
- **Extensive experience in child abuse, domestic violence, complex medical conditions, psychiatric conditions, and juvenile delinquency**

**\*Individual providers meet some or all of the above qualifications**

### **Play Therapy**

Children often misbehave and act out, or show other signs of stress, when they are unable to cope with certain situations. In play therapy, the counselor works to understand the child's play and help him/her learn how to change the way the child thinks about, feels toward and resolves concerns. Play therapy can help children work through their feelings related to divorce, relocation, family conflict and traumas. The play therapist can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, family therapist, reunification therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Gina Galloway, PhD, LPC-S

### **Filial Therapy**

When the parent-child relationship has been compromised, as may have occurred for families involved in family court litigation, the filial therapist helps the parent enhance the relationship with the child by working to establish healthy interaction patterns. Parents, through play with the child, learn ways to appropriately respond to a child's emotions and behaviors to enhance the child's development and improve the parent-child relationship. The filial therapist can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, family therapist, reunification therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Gina Galloway, PhD, LPC-S

### **Reunification Therapy**

In situations where children have been separated from a parent (or parents), which can be due to a variety of circumstances including alienation and/or estrangement, reunification therapy may be necessary to strengthen and heal the ruptured relationship between parent(s) and child(ren). This is a unique type of therapy that will need to include the custodial parent or guardian, estranged parent(s) and child(ren). The reunification therapist develops a treatment plan based on the specific history and needs of the family, being attentive to factors such as substance abuse, domestic violence and alienating behaviors. Reunification therapy has the best outcomes when there is a team of professionals involved, including the reunification therapist, child therapist, adult therapist and amicus attorney.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Michael Flynn, JD, PhD
- Kim England, LCSW

### **Parental Alienation Therapy**

Parental alienation, as a psychological syndrome, does not exist. However, parents may engage in behaviors which, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to a strained or ruptured relationship between the child(ren) and the other parent. In these cases, individual therapy with the alienating (offending) parent (often as part of the professional team approach in reunification therapy) is necessary to facilitate a healthy relationship with both parents. Alienating parents may need therapeutic assistance to support the child(ren)'s relationship with the other parent, especially when there is high conflict between parties.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW

### **What is a Tier Approach to Services:**

**A tier approach to services involves the use of a court order that evolves from less invasive to more invasive services, depending on the level of conflict within the family system. At the outset the order defines each level, should the conflict continue, reducing the likelihood of future court involvement.**

### **Benefits of a Tier Approach to Services:**

- **One order providing parents the opportunity to make better choices and save money**
- **Reducing the need to return to court as often regarding coparenting matters, if ever**
- **Offering parents choices and consequences up front**
- **Helping attorneys guide their clients without having to return to court**

### **Individual Counseling-Adult**

It is not uncommon for a parent or other family member/guardian to experience emotional struggles during or after the course of family court litigation. For those individuals whose personal struggles affect their ability to parent, individual counseling is recommended. The individual counselor helps the parent identify beliefs, feelings and behaviors that may be contributing to the parent's difficulty and, together, the parent and counselor work to challenge cognitions and establish healthy alternatives. One of the concerns with individual therapy involved the limited information the therapist has access to regarding their own client. However, the individual counselor can receive more information by working as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW
- Gina Galloway, PhD, LPC-S
- Kim England, LCSW

### **Individual Counseling-Child**

When children are exposed to parental conflict, as is often the case in family court litigation, it can be helpful for the child to have a neutral counselor, trained in the dynamics of family court litigation, to provide understanding, support and feedback that allow the child to withdraw from the parental conflict and focus on individual growth and personal goals. Counselors trained to work with these children avoid taking "sides" with either parent (or guardian) and focus on helping children establish healthy coping strategies to manage distress. The child's counselor can work as a team member providing comprehensive support along with the parenting coordinator/facilitator, coparenting counselor, amicus attorney, reunification therapist, and child(ren)'s therapist.

Providers include:

- Jane Phillips, PhD, LCSW (ages 8 and over)
- Gina Galloway, PhD, LPC-S (ages 3 and over)
- Kim England, LCSW (ages 6 and over)

### **Co-Parenting Education**

When parents (or other family members/guardians) are involved in suits affecting the parent child relationship (SAPCR), coparent education may facilitate effective coparenting and reduce litigation. In addition, this is an intervention that may reduce future litigation and minimize the need for more intensive interventions. Coparent education trains parents to deal with common issues that arise when children are raised between two (or more) homes and assists parents in the transition from an intimate relationship to a business relationship, with particular focus on effective communication skills.

Providers include:

- Bradley Craig, LMSW-IPR, CFLE (Children in the Middle)

### **Other**

In addition to the above named services, additional educational services are sometimes beneficial to the families. Such educational services include

- General Parent Education provided by Kim England, LCSW
- Anger Management provided by Bradley Craig, LMSW-IPR
- Parallel Parenting Education provided by Bradley Craig, LMSW-IPR

### **Helpful Resources**

#### **North Texas Families in Transition (NTXFIT)**

[www.ntxfrit.com](http://www.ntxfrit.com)

#### **The Association of Family and Conciliation Courts**

[www.AFCCnet.org](http://www.AFCCnet.org)

#### **Coparenting Texas**

[www.coparentingtexas.com](http://www.coparentingtexas.com)